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The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "United Nations publications: enhancing cost-effectiveness in implementing legislative mandates" (JIU/REP/97/2).

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UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATIONS

ENHANCING COST-EFFECTIVENESS IN IMPLEMENTING LEGISLATIVE MANDATES

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Acronyms

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
DAM	Department of Administration and Management
DDSMS	Department for Development Support and Management Services
DESIPA	Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis
DHA	Department of Humanitarian Affairs
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DSCSD	Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development
DPI	Department of Public Information
DPKO	Department of Peace-keeping Operations
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GPO	United States Government Printing Office
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAMLADP	Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
OCSS	Office of Conference and Support Services
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
OLA	Office of Legal Affairs
UNBIS	United Nations Bibliographic Information System
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDCP	United Nations International Drug Control Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNU	United Nations University
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The United Nations has been devoting a significant level of resources to publications (defined here as distinct from parliamentary documents) as one of its activities. The objective of this report is to contribute to the efforts being made to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of United Nations publishing activities through a set of recommendations which, if put into practice, would help enhance the role of United Nations publications in implementing the mandates of intergovernmental bodies, and improve the cost-effectiveness of the publishing activities.

In order to achieve this objective, the Joint Inspection Unit reviewed, in the main, the following aspects of United Nations publishing activities:

- the relevance, usefulness and potential for duplication of existing United Nations publications;
- publications policies and practices, as well as the administrative, managerial and organizational set-up and oversight of the publishing activities of the United Nations Secretariat; and,
- various issues concerning the planning, production and sales/distribution stages of the publishing process.

The major findings and recommendations on each of the above aspects are as follows:

The relevance, usefulness and potential for duplication of existing United Nations publications

Publications are intended to respond to legislative mandates, though most are based on general, rather than on specific mandates, and little if any systematic review has been conducted on the validity of the mandates regardless of how old they are. Utility/readership surveys are conducted in a sporadic, unsystematic manner, and there is almost no review on whether publications are actually meeting their respective objectives. Efforts for identifying duplicate, marginal and/or obsolete publications are minimal (paras. 7-26).

RECOMMENDATION 1: All United Nations substantive legislative bodies should include, in their respective programme of work, an agenda on publications, and based on the substantive inputs by the Secretariat, should proceed with the following objectives (paras. 12-26):

(1) To review and assess, as a part of the review of the respective work programme, all existing publications programmes in terms of, in particular:
- **relevance to mandates, including a thorough review of the validity of the mandates themselves; and,**
- **degree of usefulness for attaining the objectives of the respective mandates, based on a systematic, comprehensive utility survey, as well as post-publication evaluations as required;**

(2) To identify possible duplication among existing publications (within the United Nations, between the UN and organizations inside and outside the United Nations system), as well as marginal and/or obsolete publications;

(3) To come up with appropriate proposals on the consolidation and/or elimination, including the abandonment of certain publications in favour of other organizations, by taking into account the comparative advantages of each organization, department, agency or fund.

Publications policy and practices

Policy-related problems and issues identified in the past are still valid. A number of relevant papers, including the Secretary-General's report on publications policy (A/C.5/48/10) and administrative instructions on a variety of topics have been issued. The General Assembly, however, has not conducted any in-depth review of the matter for some time (paras. 28-31).

RECOMMENDATION 2: In order to enhance the role that publications play in implementing the mandates of intergovernmental bodies and, concurrently, to improve the cost-effectiveness of its publishing activities, the Secretary-General should submit the most updated report on publications policy to the United Nations General Assembly at its 52nd session. The General Assembly in turn should conduct a detailed assessment of existing publications policies and practices, and may wish to propose any necessary modifications, by taking into account the recommendations presented in this report (paras. 30-31).

Administrative, managerial and organizational set-up and oversight

Under the current structure at the United Nations Secretariat, the various functions performed and the organizational units involved in publishing activities are split between two departments, DPI and OCSS. In other words, no single department/office is in the position to oversee the publishing process in its entirety, and the manuscripts awaiting publication are apparently handed back and forth between the various units of the departments concerned without sufficient coordination and without day-to-day monitoring. Not infrequently, these factors unduly lengthen the publication process. At the same time, the interdepartmental Publications Board, which is supposed to have overall control and oversight responsibility including the supervision of the execution of publications programmes, is not functioning in an effective manner (paras. 32-39).

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Secretary-General should review the current administrative, managerial and organizational structure of publishing activities and introduce necessary reforms at the United Nations Headquarters. These could include the possible consolidation of a number of the existing functions and units into a more centralized structure by taking into account, inter alia, the requirements of (para.39):

(1) Streamlining and accelerating the publishing process; and,

(2) A greater integration and coordination between publishing-related functions/units (such as the editing, production, marketing), in addition to a need for better coordination between those units and author departments.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The Secretary-General should strengthen the Publications Board, by reinforcing its mandates (including the mandate indicated in recommendation 6 below), as well as in terms of its working methods and practices, in order to ensure that the Board provides truly effective overall control, oversight and coordination, in addition to policy guidance on publishing activities (para. 39).

Issues at the planning stage of the publishing process

There are a number of issues to be addressed in particular at the planning stage of the publishing process. These issues relate to the criteria for producing publications, the planning and oversight at the departmental as well as at the organizational level, the budgetary treatment of publishing activities, the review process of the proposed publications by the intergovernmental bodies, and the Secretariat's handling of the publishing process at the planning stage (paras 40 -46).

RECOMMENDATION 5: Specific mandates to be provided normally in resolutions/decisions of the intergovernmental bodies, should be the primary criterion for planning new publications, and publications based on general mandates (which do not contain specific requests for publications) should be kept to a minimum (para. 41).

RECOMMENDATION 6: All proposed publications programmes should be screened prior to the preparation of each biennial programme budget, first at the departmental level, and then at the Secretariat level (Publications Board). Of primary consideration should be relevance to mandates, usefulness for implementing mandates and potential for duplication, both within the United Nations and between the UN and elsewhere. The Dag Hammarskjold Library could prepare a consolidated publications list to facilitate this exercise (para. 42).

RECOMMENDATION 7: With a view to exercising, above all, a better budgetary control of the United Nations publishing activities, the Secretary-General should institute as part of the programme budget a new system whereby, starting with the biennium 2000-2001, each department/office receives a separate but consolidated budgetary line covering publishing activities (para. 43).

RECOMMENDATION 8: As a rule, no publication should be produced under the United Nations regular budget unless the publication in question is contained in the budgetary provision mentioned in recommendation 7 and is approved by the General Assembly within the framework of the programme budget (para. 44).

RECOMMENDATION 9: Decisions by substantive legislative bodies requesting new publication(s), subsequent to those approved in the programme budget, should be taken only after the careful review of, among other things, information on the potential for duplication (or non-duplication) and the financial implications statement to be provided by the Secretariat. Furthermore, these decisions should incorporate, in principle, a time frame (a "sun-set" rule), as well as a clause for review after a certain period of time (paras. 41 and 45).

RECOMMENDATION 10: Once the publication(s) or publications programme(s) is(are) approved by the General Assembly, the entire publishing process (writing, editing, translation, production and sales/distribution) should be planned in a more coordinated and integrated manner (para. 46).

Issues at the production stage of the publishing process

There is evidence that the production stage can be made more efficient through the use of advanced technologies, in particular through electronic publishing. Nonetheless, the need for print publications will remain at least for some time. In this context, the question of a comparative cost-analysis of internal versus external printing is one of the long debated issues, but since a cost-accounting system as the basis for such a comparison has not yet been fully developed, a comparative cost-analysis at present cannot be established in an objective manner. Another matter pertaining to cost-effectiveness at the production stage of the publishing process (which appears to have merit), is the consideration of cooperative arrangements such as joint publishing (paras. 47-67).

RECOMMENDATION 11: As the basis for producing publications in a cost-effective manner as well as the basis for the new budgetary system proposed in recommendation 7, the United Nations Secretariat should develop a cost-accounting system by the end of 1998, in order to enable it to have knowledge of the full cost of publications (i.e., direct and, to the extent possible, indirect costs), in addition to facilitating identification of possible savings potential for any given cost item (paras. 43, 51, 53-54 and 56).

RECOMMENDATION 12: Pending the establishment of a cost-accounting system,

(1) An annual planning of the printing workload should be made, in order to make maximum and more rational use of existing internal printing capacities by spreading out the workload throughout the year. In this context, the choice of publications with complexity and/or specificity which cannot be handled internally should be minimized (paras. 57-58);

(2) Current outsourcing practices on publications should be reviewed by the Secretariat from the standpoint of internal control (on vendor selection, contracting process, etc.) and of the management/monitoring of the outsourced activities, including the contractors' performance, in order to ensure an efficient and economical use of resources (para. 59);

(3) A review should also be conducted by the Secretariat to provide some flexibility to the use of the external printing account for internal printing purposes, as appropriate (para. 58).

RECOMMENDATION 13: Once a cost-accounting system is established, the question of an appropriate mode of printing: internal or external, mix of the two, partial outsourcing, etc. should be reviewed/reconsidered first by the Secretariat and a proposal made to the General Assembly at its 54th session within the context of the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, with the aim of making printing activities more cost-effective by duly taking into account the relative advantages and disadvantages of each mode of printing (paras. 53 and 60).

RECOMMENDATION 14: In view of potential as well as proved advantages of the use of advanced technologies, including electronic publishing,

(1) The increased use of advanced technologies for the publishing process should be enhanced by the Secretariat; this may include "electronic processing" of materials to be published, establishment of a computerized workflow system with desktop publishing capabilities (paras. 48 and 61);

(2) **A general shift towards the various forms of electronic publishing (CD-ROMS, Internet, etc.) should be intensified by the Secretariat, by paying due regard to cost recovery, legal and qualitative aspects, in addition to the need to enhance the capacities of both the Secretariat in terms of producing electronic publications and the developing countries in terms of access to such electronic products (paras. 50 and 61-63).**

RECOMMENDATION 15: Cooperative arrangements, in particular joint publications between the United Nations Secretariat and other entities, should be promoted by the Secretariat when feasible, with a view to encouraging a single and consolidated publication on identical or similar subjects (see recommendation 1) (paras. 64-67).

Issues at the sales and distribution stage of the publishing process

Revenue from the sale of publications requires closer monitoring. Currently, the sales income is primarily used to finance a wide range of sales-related expenses including the cost associated with a number of posts. This practice inhibits, among other things, the provision of incentives for more cost-effective publishing activities. Furthermore, it appears that there is a need to strengthen marketing and promotional efforts in a more systematic manner (paras. 68-79).

RECOMMENDATION 16: Sales income reports, indicating total revenues from various sales channels, should be produced and reviewed monthly or at least quarterly by the Secretariat (para. 70).

RECOMMENDATION 17: With a view to using income generated by the sale of publications in a more rational manner, while at the same time providing incentives for more cost-effective publishing activities, the current treatment of sales income should be reviewed by the Secretariat and a proposal made to the General Assembly at its 52nd session, with the aim of giving consideration to a more flexible treatment of sales income as well as to a related creation of a self-supporting publications fund or account (see recommendation 2) (paras. 71-74).

RECOMMENDATION 18: More vigorous and systematic sales promotion should be conducted by the Secretariat with the aim of maximizing financial returns to the United Nations. In this context, the wealth of unique information available within the United Nations could be used for publications subject to mandates, so long as they are deemed to have commercial value (para. 77).

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report is presented pursuant to the General Assembly resolution 50/206 C of 23 December 1995 in which it is stated that the Assembly: "endorses the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that the Joint Inspection Unit be requested to conduct a comprehensive survey of the role publications play in implementing mandates of intergovernmental bodies and the extent to which recurrent publications could be made more cost-effective in this regard." In preparing this report, the Inspectors have further taken into account resolution 51/211 B of 18 December 1996 in which the General Assembly: "reiterated its request to the JIU and asked that it submit such survey no later than the end of the fifty-first session," as well as a number of JIU reports produced in the past on related subjects.[1]

2. Publications constitute one of the important instruments for implementing mandates of intergovernmental bodies. At the same time, publishing activities are consuming a significant amount of resources. In the light of this, the question of making the activities more cost-effective has been a major concern of the Member States and, in particular, of ACABQ.

3. With this background in mind, this report intends to identify problems which exist within publishing activities and to propose measures on how to improve the present situation in the following 3-step manner:

(i) by presenting an overall picture of existing publications (in particular recurrent publications) in terms of relevance to mandates, utility and duplication (Section A);

(ii) by reviewing some of the fundamental issues which relate to publications policy as well as to the administrative, managerial and organizational set-up and oversight of publications activities (Section B);

(iii) by dealing, in more detail, with the issues relating to the cost-effectiveness of each of the three stages of the publications process: planning, production and sales/distribution (Section C).

4. The report focuses on a number of specific issues which exist within the United Nations Secretariat, and therefore does not cover system-wide cost-savings issues or modalities such as joint printing facilities in the major United Nations centres.[2] Nevertheless, in order to benefit from good practices elsewhere, the entire body of the United Nations system organizations (including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) and several organizations outside the United Nations system (such as OECD and the Council of Europe) were approached by way of questionnaires and/or interviews.

5. The recommendations presented in this report accordingly have been prepared by taking into account the prevailing practices and experiences in those organizations in addition to the Inspectors' review and assessment of the situation at the United Nations. Although the recommendations are addressed primarily to the United Nations General Assembly and to the United Nations Secretariat, the Inspectors believe that the gist of the recommendations could also be applied, mutatis mutandis, to a number of organizations within the United Nations system.

6. The Inspectors wish to thank all the organizations both within and outside of the United Nations system, that contributed to this report.

II. HOW TO MAKE PUBLICATIONS MORE COST-EFFECTIVE IN IMPLEMENTING LEGISLATIVE MANDATES

A. REVIEW OF EXISTING PUBLICATIONS

7. The Inspectors believe that a review of existing publications is clearly the first step to be undertaken in response to the General Assembly's request in its resolution 50/206 C.

8. To facilitate this exercise, an extensive questionnaire on existing publications, or more specifically, on the publications programme for the biennium 1996-97 was sent out to departments at Headquarters as well as to offices away from Headquarters, including Regional Commissions.

9. Before presenting a summary of findings, however, the Inspectors wish to make reference to one pertinent matter; namely, the level of budgetary appropriations finally approved in late December 1995 by the United Nations General Assembly for 1996-97 involved mandatory cost reductions of $154 million, in addition to the $98 million which had already been included in the Secretary General's programme budget submission.[3] In response to this budgetary reduction, and within the context of the related efficiency reviews, an intensive organization-wide exercise was conducted in early 1996, and as a result of this exercise, a number of measures relevant to the publications programme had either already been taken or eventually proposed to be taken by the departments and offices under review before the JIU approached them with the questionnaires pertinent to the present report.

10. These measures included termination, curtailment and deferral of a number of publications which constituted a part of the originally proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-97. In the Inspectors' opinion, this seems to imply two things: first of all, that certain publications in various departments and offices appear to be non-essential or of low priority in their work programmes, in particular under the imposition of stringent financial constraints; and secondly, that the publications programme, at least in the departments and offices concerned, has been reviewed or screened with the aim of streamlining the programme.

11. With this background in mind, the Inspectors' findings[4] on existing publications focussing on recurrent publications (as authorized for the biennium 1996-97) are summarized in A.1, A.2 and A.3 below:

A.1 Relevance to Mandates and Related Matters

12. Most publications are intended to respond in some way to the mandates of legislative bodies. But there are also a number of publications that are being produced on the initiative of the Secretariat for instance, at ESCWA, where 4 out of 17 of their recurrent publications are being produced on the Secretariat's initiative, according to a report received from the Commission; and at ECA, where many of the non-recurrent publications which are based on the Secretariat's initiative, are included in its publications programme for 1996-97.

13. In many instances, however, publications that are allegedly supported by mandates are based on general mandates, rather than specific ones. The position of the United Nations Secretariat on this matter has been the following:

"Under the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, which were approved by the General Assembly in its resolutions 37/234 and 38/227, legislative mandates for publications are provided by requests and directives to the Secretary-General contained in resolutions and decisions of the United Nations intergovernmental bodies; the specificity of such mandates varies among programmes, depending upon the working methods of the legislative bodies concerned, and may in some cases consist of legislation establishing an organizational unit or providing a general mandate for its work. In addition, under the provisions of programme planning rule 103.2, the adoption of the medium-term plan provides a legislative mandate to new activities proposed by the Secretary-General in fulfilment of a general objective of the Organization."[5]

14. The Inspectors have detected also that hardly any serious and systematic consideration has ever been given to the question of the validity of the respective mandates themselves even if the mandates are, in some instances, quite old. Under the programme planning regulations and rules, legislative mandates are supposed to be subject to review every five years.[6]

A.2 Utility and Readership

15. Utility and readership surveys or reviews are considered the next step necessary when justifying publications. In reality, however, the Secretariat in general seems to be content with the receipt of the formal and/or informal remarks (in other words, compliments) provided by Member States/experts at various meetings, etc., and these surveys or reviews are conducted on only a limited number of publications. Not surprisingly, a comprehensive and systematic review is rarely undertaken for a variety of reasons, including, inter alia: lack of staff (UNDCP); lack of adequate financial resources and specialized expertise in addition to the need for a specific mandate for formal surveys (DPA); time consumption (instead of sending out questionnaires, other indicators such as sales figures, statements at the General Assembly and/or comments from users could be used) (OLA); as well as an argument that "conducting surveys would result in duplication, since publications are mandated by intergovernmental bodies" (DDSMS). In contrast to these, UNCTAD has been distributing readership questionnaires at all intergovernmental meetings, since 1995, replacing its past practice of including questionnaires in its publications. The same questionnaire has also become available on the UNCTAD home page on the World Wide Web as of April 1996. Despite these efforts, however, the feedback through these processes remains somewhat disappointing according to UNCTAD.

16 In connection with the above, the Inspectors wish to add that the outcome of surveys or reviews depends on a number of factors, not the least of which is the intended readership: i.e., is the survey designed to target the appropriate persons/groups? Compliments and other positive feedback received either through such surveys or various fora will not mean much unless the publications in question are actually meeting their respective objectives with their intended readers in an effective manner. According to a readership survey put out by DPI for example, the *Africa Recovery* publication received highly complimentary responses[7], but according to a recent JIU report[8], once its actual news coverage, circulation and periodicity were considered, this publication may not necessarily prove to be the most cost-effective in meeting its main objective of promoting a global awareness of Africa's severe economic difficulties.

17. Furthermore, it appears also that no serious review has ever been conducted from the perspective that publications can be considered as only one of several means available (in addition to advisory services, training, reports to legislative bodies, substantive servicing, etc.) for carrying out legislative mandates. The Inspectors believe that, unless specifically requested by the intergovernmental bodies, the 'publications option' should be chosen only when this is considered the most effective tool available to complement, and not to duplicate, other means.[9]

A.3 Duplication and Related Matters

18 The Inspectors found that efforts made to identify publications which are duplicated, marginal and/or obsolete are minimal. In fact, apart from a number of publications which had either been terminated or deferred (as was the case of ECA[10]) within the context of the organization-wide exercise to meet the budgetary reductions (see para. 9), only three examples were evident in the responses to the recent JIU questionnaire; all of these pertained to the duplication of publications within their own departments: (i) the discontinuation of *Disarmament Study Series*, which were "basically reprints of various study reports" (DPA), (ii) the termination of *Register of Texts of Conventions and other Instruments, Vol. III* as "texts to be published in the register are increasingly available through other sources" (OLA); and (iii) the non- issuance of *Annual Update on African Debt* during the biennium 1996-97, as "it would have constituted a duplication" with another publication, *Comprehensive Overview of Africa* which is to be published in 1997.[11]

19. Besides the duplication of publications within the same department as mentioned above, duplication can and does exist in a variety of cases, including:

(i) whereby different departments, offices, agencies and organizations elsewhere (both within and outside the United Nations system) are producing publications with either identical or very similar titles and/or subjects (though the focus may sometimes differ);

(ii) whereby an identical publication on a specific theme is repeatedly produced simply in a different format or under different cover with a different symbol[12]; and,

(iii) whereby a United Nations Headquarters-produced publication which is comprehensive and global in nature on some specific topic/issue appears to be eventually broken down into geographical regions and separate publications are issued, focussing on the respective region. A typical example would be the publications relating to economic and social survey; i.e., in addition to *World Economic and Social Survey* produced annually by the United Nations Headquarters, publications with eventually identical titles (whose main differences could be their regional focus) are being produced on a recurrent basis by all Regional Commissions[13], except ECE.

20. There are at least two identifiable factors behind these duplications: decentralized and uncoordinated decision-making processes and an uncoordinated and incoherent programme formulation.

21. It is the view of the Inspectors that one of the basic first steps to avoid duplication (such as the one described in case i above) is to make a comprehensive review of the work programmes of the departments and offices within the United Nations in order to identify:

(i) any possible duplication and overlap which exists in the work programmes themselves which may be leading/lead to possible duplications among the respective publications programme; and/or

(ii) any programmes or activities which could be merged with those of other departments or offices which may eventually facilitate the streamlining of some publication programmes.[14]

22. Once this exercise is completed, the next step should be the identification of actual duplicate publications, not only within the United Nations but also between the United Nations and elsewhere, both inside and outside the United Nations system. The Dag Hammarskjold Library at the United Nations Headquarters could assist in this task, but the Inspectors have learned that, unless the entire United Nations system of organizations is effectively linked with compatible hardware and software so that a single, fully-integrated database is created (a need which has already been identified in a previous JIU report[15]), the task of identifying duplicate publications is time-consuming and cannot be considered comprehensive.

23. The consolidation and/or abandonment of some publications in favour of other organizations further constitutes an effective means of dealing with the problem of duplication. One example of this type of solution is found in the merging of the DPI's publication *Development Business* with the World Bank's competing *International Business Opportunities Services* (IBOS), which not only eliminated a duplicate publication within the United Nations system, but it also boosted revenue through its take-over of IBOS subscriptions. This increased income will finance the development of a new electronic offshoot of *Development Business* which is expected to be on-line in 1997 and to generate revenue.[16] Another good example can be found in ECE, which has discontinued four of its statistical publications on energy in favour of those produced by IAEA. ECE has also introduced a practice by which the work of some ECE Divisions (including that of publications) is planned in a coordinated manner with similar work underway in other organizations, such as OECD.

24. In this context, the Inspectors wish to refer to the policy statement made in the report[17] of the Secretary-General that "whenever appropriate, encouragement should be given to the publication of interdisciplinary works, prepared through cooperation among several departments or offices, including cooperation among several organizations in the United Nations system." The Inspectors are aware that author departments or offices occasionally receive mandates of an interdisciplinary nature in issues such as environment, poverty alleviation, women, etc. which tend to induce a number of publications which reflect the different perspectives of the respective author departments. These publications could not be regarded as duplication per se. However, the Inspectors wish to endorse the above-referenced policy statement from the point of view of cost-effectiveness. For example, various publications on the question of women could be consolidated into a single comprehensive volume, discontinuing the present practice whereby similar publications on women are being produced separately by many departments, offices or organizations, with each one focussing on a single specific issue.

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25. In the light of the finding on existing publications as mentioned in A.1, A.2 and A.3 above, the Inspectors consider that it is now high time to make a comprehensive review of all existing publications following a so-called "zero-based approach".[18] In other words, instead of just continuing existing publications programmes and/or building up existing publications programmes with new publications, all existing publications should be thoroughly reviewed and assessed as the first step, whether they are truly justified and meaningful in terms, in particular, of both relevance to mandates (including review of mandates themselves) and actual utility, by taking into account the need to ensure not only a fulfilment of mandated objectives in a true sense, but also an effective complementarity of publications to other means in implementing mandates. The question of avoiding duplication with similar publications produced by other departments, offices and organization, both inside and outside the United Nations system, as well as the question of identifying marginal and/or obsolete publications[19] should constitute an integral part of such an exercise.

26. In this context, it is the conviction of the Inspectors that legislative bodies (with the substantive support of the Secretariat) should play a much more active and systematic role in the review and rationalization of the publications programmes. Among many legislative bodies, the Statistical Commission, the Commission on Population and Development and the Committee on Information could be considered relatively well-functioning legislative bodies. The Inspectors believe, however, that the working methods of all substantive legislative bodies, including the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) (which has the primary responsibility in the conduct of such exercises), need to be strengthened along the lines indicated in Recommendations 1 and 8, initially in relation to the review of existing publications.[20]

(→ **recommendations 1 and 9**)

B. FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES RELATING TO PUBLICATIONS POLICY, ADMINISTRATIVE/MANAGERIAL/ ORGANIZATIONAL SET-UP AND OVERSIGHT

27. This section deals with a few fundamental issues or preconditions which should be taken into consideration when attempting to make the United Nations publishing process and activities more cost-effective.

B.1 Publications Policies and Practices

28. The United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 46/185 B(1991) entitled "Publications policy" and in its subsequent resolution 47/73 B (1992) and others, pointed out a number of problems and issues relating to the overall publications policies and practices, including an unclear distinction between publications requested by intergovernmental bodies and those produced by Secretariat initiative, uneven quality and relevance of publications, a need to review all existing publications, as well as a need to avoid duplication of other publications both within and outside of the United Nations system.

29. Meanwhile, in accordance with the request of the General Assembly, a review of the publications policy was conducted at the United Nations Secretariat under the direction of the Publications Board, and in 1993, the Secretary-General submitted a report (Publications policy of the United Nations, A/C.5/48/10) to the General Assembly. At the same time, the Publications Board has recently been issuing internally a number of relevant administrative instructions in the ST/AI/189 series on a variety of relevant topics. However, in the last few sessions, the General Assembly has not taken up the Secretary-General's report including its updated version.

30. As seen in section A, a number of problems and issues identified in paragraph 28 above are still very much valid, and at this conjuncture, the cost-effectiveness of publishing activities could certainly be enhanced if the United Nations established a publications policy which is solid, coherent, and innovative in nature. In doing so, the electronic environment in particular should be taken into account, as all phases of the publishing process (research, writing, production and dissemination) can be executed through that medium.

31. The Inspectors therefore believe that the General Assembly should now make a critical assessment of the publications policies and practices currently in place in a comprehensive manner. This assessment should include the possible identification of contradictions among the various administrative instructions, with a view to facilitating the preparation of coherent administrative rules and procedures (in the form of a manual) in order to effectively implement publications policies.[21]

(→ recommendation 2)

B.2 Administrative, Managerial and Organizational Set-up and Oversight

32. As a result of restructuring in 1993[22] as well as the subsequent measures taken at the Secretariat in 1995 and 1996, publishing activities are split between DPI and OCSS, apart from manuscript preparation, which is done by the respective author departments. Namely, under the current set-up of the Secretariat, the organizational units responsible for editorial, design, external publishing, production and coordination, sales and marketing, etc. are located in DPI, whereas the units responsible for editorial and translation (including contractual translations), copy-preparation and proof-reading, documents control, records, procurement and transportation, reproduction (relating to internal printing), commodity procurement (relating to external printing), and distribution are a part of OCSS.[23]

33. Consequently, although there exists a mechanism of a weekly production coordination meeting organized by the documents control section (OCSS) with the participation of the relevant sections of DPI and OCSS, no single department or office is in a position to oversee or monitor the publications process in its entirety on a daily basis. In fact, DPI is supposed to be responsible for the overall planning and implementation of the publications programme[24] through its production and coordination section. In reality, however, it has proved impossible for it to do so (e.g., the production and coordination section staff are not allowed to contact external printers directly, as external printing is officially the responsibility of OCSS).

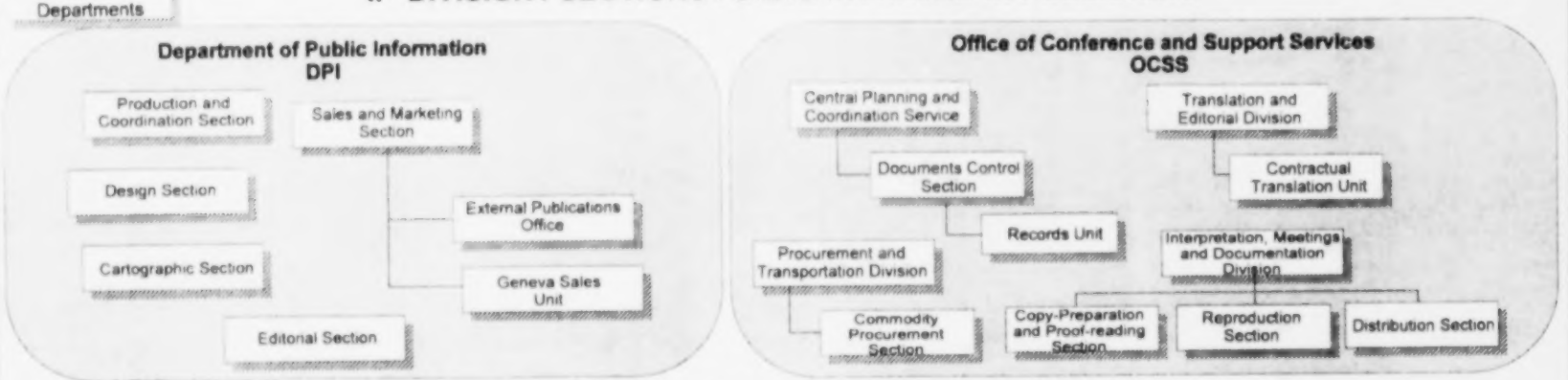
34. In addition, due to the organizational structure outlined above (para. 32), the materials to be produced are apparently handed back and forth between various sections/divisions in DPI and OCSS, throughout the entire publications process (see Chart 1 for the general publication process). Not infrequently, these factors unduly lengthen the publication process. For example, in the case of the *Treaty Series*, until very recently, once the legally reviewed and proof-read manuscript (of compiled documents) left the Treaty section (OLA), it had to go through as many as 27 separate stages (see Chart 2) before it was published, and not surprisingly, a total of 185 Treaty Series manuscripts submitted to the copy-preparation and proof-reading section between 1986 and mid-1996 were awaiting publication as of mid-1996 (see para. 48).[25]

35. In theory, it is the interdepartmental Publications Board, established by the Secretary-General in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules[26], that has overall responsibility for the publications programme, and this includes the supervision of its execution, in addition to the other functions relating to policies, planning and coordination. In reality, however, the role of the Publications Board is limited, because the Board which is composed of the Heads of departments and offices meets at best twice a year[27] under the chairmanship of the Assistant Secretary-General of DPI and is not able to perform its functions with the amount of attention to detail required. Accordingly, the Board, in practice, delegates its functions to a working committee at Headquarters (as well as working groups at Geneva and Vienna), but even the committee meets usually once a month only. Within this somewhat rather limited time-frame, the committee takes up, in an ad hoc manner, a wide range of policy, in addition to operational matters (including, for instance, reviews of "negotiated agreements with external publishers" presented by the External Publications Office/DPI) for approval by the Board. Yet the committee[28] is apparently not in a position to be involved in the day-to-day operation of the publishing activities.

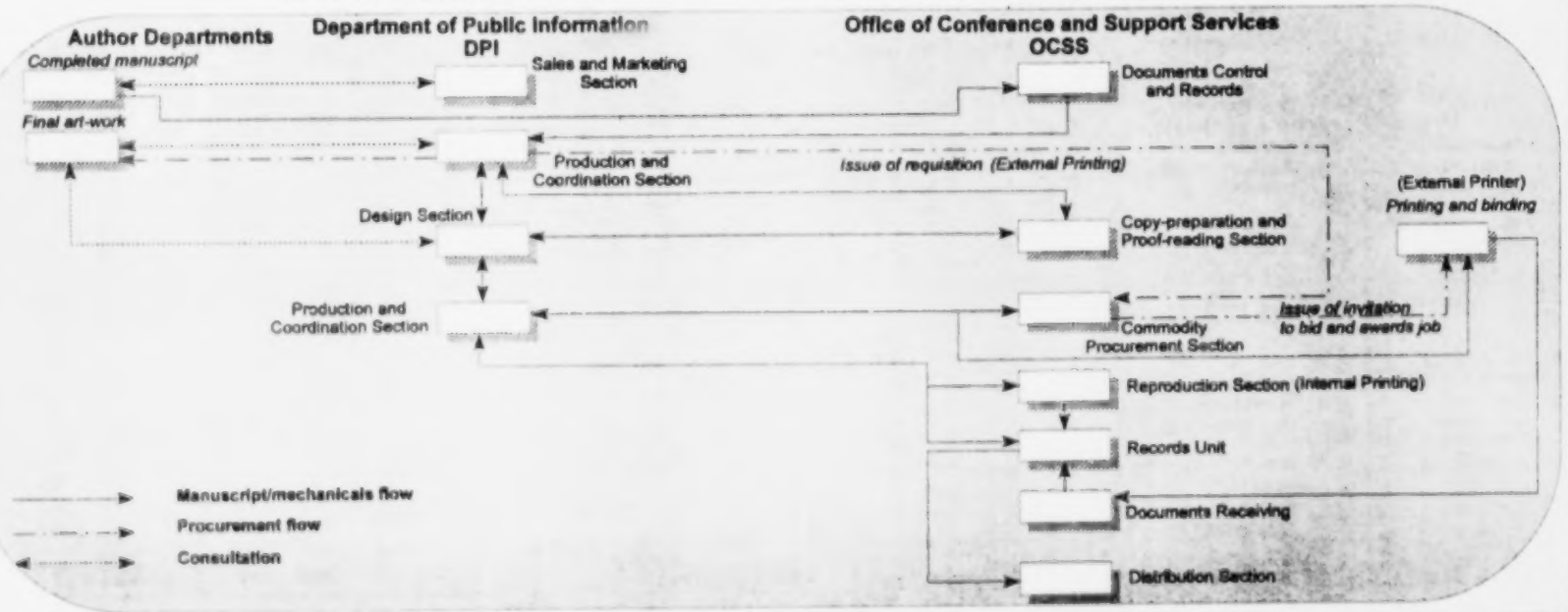
36. As is clear from the above paragraphs 32-35, the administrative, managerial and organizational set-up in place at the Secretariat has weaknesses, including a vacuum in terms of efficient day-to-day management and monitoring of publishing activities, in addition to an eventual lack of strong and continuos overall oversight, control and coordination mechanism at the organizational level.

CHART 1

I. DIVISION / SECTIONS / UNITS INVOLVED IN PUBLISHING



II. PRODUCTION FLOW CHART FOR PUBLICATIONS (MAIN STEPS) *

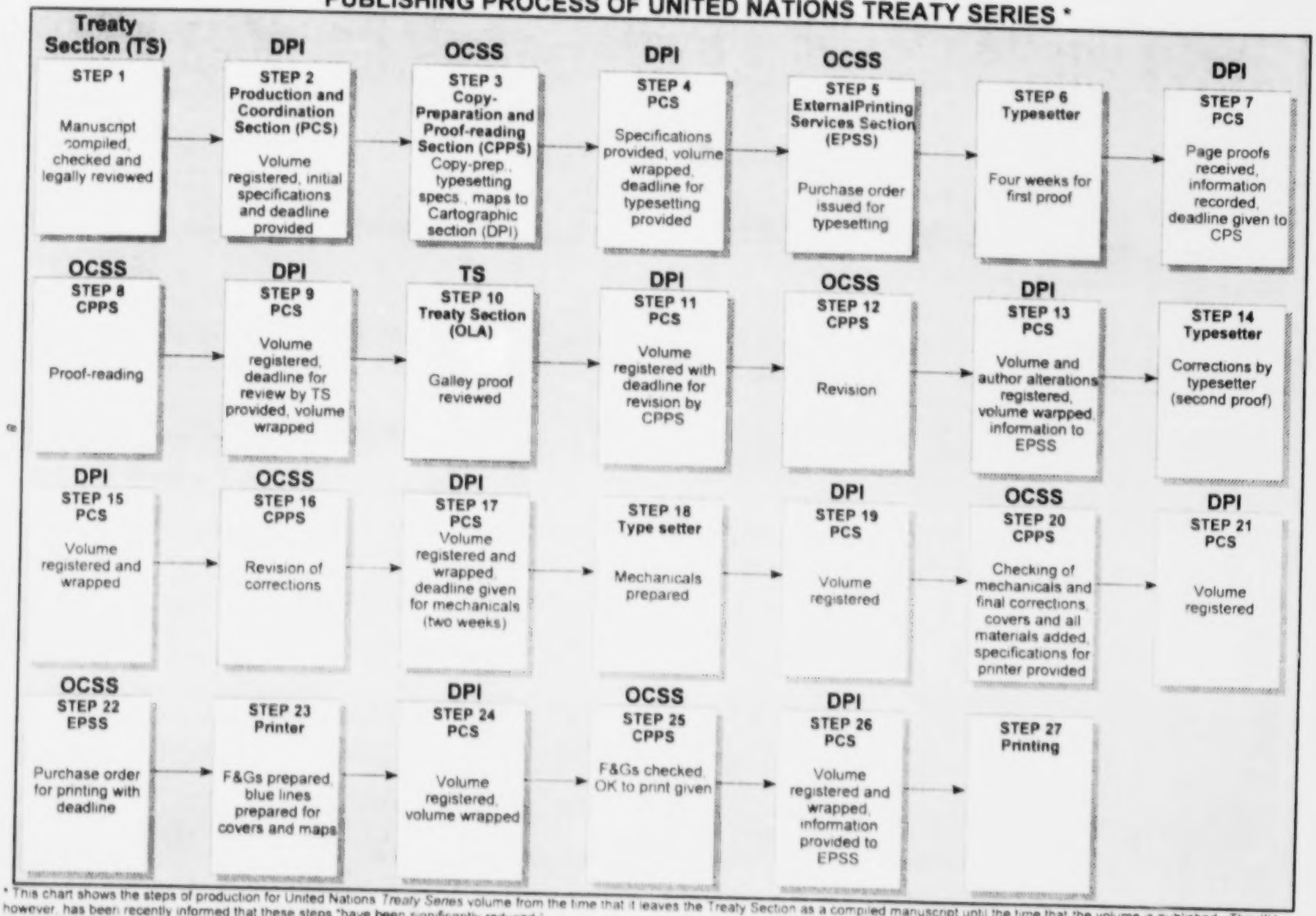


* This chart shows the steps of production for United Nations publications in general from the time that they leave the author departments as a compiled manuscript until the time they are published. Some publications may require more steps than those presented here e.g., external typesetting, or involve other sections, e.g., Cartographic Section (DPI) for maps (see Treaty Series case in chart 2).

Source: JIU, prepared on the basis of information provided by the Department of Public Information (DPI).

CHART 2

PUBLISHING PROCESS OF UNITED NATIONS TREATY SERIES *



* This chart shows the steps of production for United Nations *Treaty Series* volume from the time that it leaves the Treaty Section as a compiled manuscript until the time that the volume is published. The JIU, however, has been recently informed that these steps "have been significantly reduced." Source Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations

37. The situation outside the United Nations on this issue varies depending on the agencies; WHO, for instance, appears to be one of the most centralized[29] organization in terms of structure, where eventually all publishing-related activities (including editing, translation, design, contractual printing, distribution, sales and promotion) are placed in a single department (Division of Publishing, Language and Library Services, PLL). UNESCO also has maintained a relatively strong Publishing Office (UPO) for some time, the work of which begins once the manuscripts are completed by the author departments, and its functions include the management of a Publications Fund as well as the promotion and distribution of most of UNESCO magazines, in addition to the coordination of UNESCO's overall publishing activities. In terms of the degree of centralization, next to WHO and UNESCO perhaps comes ILO, where a large department which dealt with documents as well as publications used to exist, but on 1 January 1996, a small office called Publications Bureau was established to separate publishing activities from documents production. This new office is not the central office covering all ILO publications, but it does cover a substantial part of publications, including the major ILO periodical. In contrast to the situations at WHO, UNESCO and ILO, FAO, for example, dismantled its Publications Division in August 1996, and all of its publications-related functions have been dispersed to various divisions.

38. A centrally administered structure (such as the one in place at WHO)[30] should be able to facilitate, for instance, a rational priority-setting, say, in respect of editing by avoiding undue pressures from author departments, but the Inspectors were told that the ongoing reduction in the number of staff is negatively affecting the centralized structure of WHO. In the case of ILO, the internal restructuring described above has not only consolidated publishing activities (such as editing, production and marketing) and related administrative and managerial functions (including preparation of budget, cost, etc.) into one place (Publications Bureau), but also resulted in preliminary administrative savings on publications activities in the amount of $1.67 million, mainly as a result of the reduction in the staff costs (elimination of a number of top administrative posts and secretariat posts, as well as transfer to other departments etc). In addition, this new arrangement has made a "greater integration between editorial, production and marketing functions in the planning stages of publications" possible, resulting in an "increased capacity to move quickly with time-sensitive books, [as well as] a doubling of [projected] revenues between 1996 and 1999."[31]

39. In the light of the prevailing situation at the United Nations Secretariat, and by taking into account experiences in some of the United Nations agencies as mentioned above, the Inspectors believe that there is, first of all, a need for streamlining the publishing process (especially its administrative, managerial and organizational set-up) in order to make the entire operation more efficient and cost-effective. In this context, the establishment, without additional financial implications, of a small central unit by consolidating, as appropriate, a number of existing publishing-related functions/units scattered over the various places could be an option, and this option could be linked to the Secretary-General's recently announced reform plan on DAM (including OCSS) and DPI.[32] The Inspectors also believe that the United Nations requires an effective mechanism, at the organizational level, for control and oversight, coordination as well as policy guidance. The existing Publications Board could be utilized for this purpose, but in order to be effective, the Board should be strengthened in terms of its mandates and, in terms of its working methods and practice, possibly with an enhanced role of the Executive Secretary of the Board.

(→ recommendations 3 and 4)

C. ENHANCEMENT OF THE COST-EFFECTIVENESS AT MAIN STAGES

C.1 Planning stage

40. The planning stage is the most important of all stages because it is where many problems can be prevented or "cut at the root". As is apparent from the review in Section A and B, there are a number of problems to be addressed, in particular at the planning stage, as a shared responsibility between the Secretariat and legislative bodies. The following are some of the main issues:

C.1.1 Criteria for Producing Publications

41. As has been seen already, most publications are planned at the Secretariat on the basis of legislative mandates, but mostly they are based on general mandates, and almost no serious

review has been conducted on the validity of mandates already many years old. The Inspectors believe that this situation should be remedied by introducing a more rigid set of rules and practices. For instance, regarding the validity of mandates, the Inspectors consider that the so called "sun-set" rule should be applied to all publications; in other words, that all future mandates on publications should contain a specific time-frame as well as a review clause, and that publications of unproven value should be terminated after a certain period of time.

C.1.2 Review and Oversight of the Proposed Publications at the Secretariat

42. Author departments should take the primary responsibility for planning publications with due regard to questions such as duplication, relevance to mandates, in view of their familiarity with the contents. A few departments have some oversight mechanisms. For example, in June 1996, DHA established an Internal Publications Board with the aim of providing departmental oversight with respect to the totality of DHA publications. However, not all departments have such mechanisms in place.[33] At the organizational level, the Publications Board is supposed to play an overall and comprehensive oversight role on all the publications programme proposed by author departments, but the Inspectors have detected that not enough attention is being paid to questions such as the relevance to mandates, usefulness/significance and duplication through the Publication Board's review process. In this context, the Inspectors consider it useful if, as the basis of review by the Board, a consolidated list of the proposed publications (say, with a one page summary of each publication) is prepared, with an assistance of the Dag Hammarskjold Library. The Inspectors wish to underline a good practice of UNICEF in this regard. At UNICEF, a Publications Review Committee was set up recently to review proposals for all publications emanating from Headquarters. According to the terms of reference, "the Committee shall approve a proposal, after due consideration of the purpose and objective of the proposed publication, the intended audience and the rationale in choosing the proposed publication, potential duplication with existing UNICEF publications, the editorial and production schedule, translation requirements, and the budget, especially in term of cost-effectiveness." Furthermore, "the proposals shall be submitted (in a prescribed form) by 1 December of the year preceding the commencement of work on the publication so that adequate staff, funding and time can be reserved in annual work plans."

C.1.3 Budgetary provision on publishing activities

43. The Inspectors have detected that the United Nations has a number of separate budgetary provisions on publishing activities such as external printing account, "publishing services" (under section 26E)[34], etc. but the organization does not have a 'consolidated' budget line on publishing activities (corresponding to the full cost of publications which could be identified through a cost-accounting system referred to in section C.2.1). Because of this, it is almost impossible or at least very difficult not only to figure out, in a precise manner, the level of resources devoted to publishing activities, but also to exercise a budgetary control of such activities. In the view of the Inspectors, the United Nations should have a new budgetary system whereby the consolidated budgetary provision on publishing activities should be made at each department within the framework of the programme budget.

44. Furthermore, the Inspectors also consider that all publications[35], including the *Blue Books series*[36] which have been planned without a specific budgetary provision, should be handled procedurally in the same manner.

C.1.4 Reviewing Procedure of the Proposed Publications by Intergovernmental Bodies

45. The review, by the intergovernmental bodies, of the newly proposed publications programme, let alone existing programme, contained in the programme budget is rather superfluous. Furthermore, it has been a usual practice that decisions on requesting additional publications (subsequent to the approval of a programme budget) by substantive (as distinct from administrative and financial) legislative bodies have been taken generally without considering financial implications (which are submitted normally to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly in the case of the United Nations), information on duplication, and without a time frame.

C.1.5 Planning of the Approved Publications' Processing at the Secretariat

46. Upon receipt of an approval of a publication programme, there appears to be an insufficient coordinated planning, at the Secretariat, of its entire processing; i.e., writing, editing, translation, production and sales/distribution. This is due mainly to the present administrative, managerial and organizational set-up as described in section B, and according to the Inspectors, this situation should be remedied within the context of the reform exercise.

(→ recommendations 5 to 10)

C.2 Production stage

47. The current administrative, managerial and organizational set-up as well as the state of oversight is making the production process far from ideal in terms of coordination, control and monitoring, in particular, of work flow, which is the potential cause for delays.

48. In the meantime, there is evidence that the production stage can be substantially more efficient through the use of advanced technologies. For instance, an increasing use of desktop publishing has already been streamlining many steps in the type-setting process. In addition to OCSS and DPI, many author departments now prepare camera-ready copy using desktop publishing and other software which has cut both production time and costs. OLA (Treaty Section) has reported to the Inspectors that the implementation of an integrated workflow system, with desk-top publishing capabilities, would save as much as $US 300,000 to $US 400,00 per year, with possible additional savings of some staff costs in the long-run.[37] Furthermore, the use of advanced technologies could facilitate the retrieval of information, and this in turn would permit more informed decision-making. With the use of an adequate information retrieving software system, overestimated print runs could be recorded and modifications could be made accordingly to avoid the problems of storage, and thus minimize costs.

49. In the absence of a 'printing on-demand' capacity (i.e., the capacity to produce at any given moment, only those copies needed on short notice, with the electronic version stored for later use), the capacity to retrieve necessary information when required is a useful alternative. Record-keeping of day-to-day operations could also be made with the use of advanced technologies. For instance, existing software could be used to track manuscripts, aid in prioritizing work, estimate the completion date/time of the jobs, and provide status reports for material in-process.[38]

50. Against a background of these technological advances especially in the electronic field, "electronic publishing" has made its debut as a promising publishing modality. However, the need for traditionally printed publications (books) will not disappear, at least for the time being, for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the general lack of accessibility in developing countries to the electronic publishing medium.

C.2.1 Print Publication

51. Regarding print publications, the question of internal versus external printing is one of the long debated issues, in particular within ACABQ. In this context, the lack of a cost-accounting system in the United Nations Secretariat has been a basic concern, not only for the Advisory Committee but also for the General Assembly. Accordingly, this report focuses on these matters.

Internal versus external printing and cost-accounting system

52. The Inspectors had been informed that a computer programme capable of estimating the internal printing costs of materials and labour had been recently developed at the United Nations Secretariat. However, upon further inquiry, it was found that this software is able to provide information only on direct printing costs, and is intended solely for specific cases (particular publications).

53. The Inspectors believe that it is difficult to assess the overall cost-effectiveness of a publishing activity (including a comparative cost analysis of internal vs. external printing) without a full knowledge of both the direct (i.e., printing, binding, etc.) and indirect (research, writing, etc.) production costs.

54. The above situation on cost identification is not confined to the Secretariat of the United Nations. In fact, most of the organizations in the United Nations system do not have any system to account for indirect costs. In this situation, the experiences of WHO and UNCTAD are worthy of note. In the case of WHO, a serious attempt was

made to identify the total cost of selected publications, from the initial stage of manuscript preparation, editing, translation, typing, printing, to the final stages of mailing and distribution. Although WHO admits that its calculations are less than perfect (in the sense that, for example, costs of manuscript preparation including research, as well as overhead costs --e.g. office space and heating--, are not covered), this exercise facilitated the identification of potential savings on any given and quantifiable cost item.[39]

55. In the case of UNCTAD, a number of efforts have been made recently to rationalize its publications programme (pursuant to UNCTAD IX and the Trade and Development Board in October 1996), and in this context, a detailed analysis has since been made on all recurrent publications issued in 1996, including of the work-months (of basically professional staff on drafting and research) required for the production of each publication, and printing costs. In addition, a complete list of publications proposed for the 1998-1999 biennium, with similarly comprehensive data on each publication, has already been made available to the Member States for their review. The Inspectors believe that these are good cases in a right direction.

56. In any event, a thorough knowledge of the total costs involved in each publication, backed up by a cost-accounting system, should be the basis for a more transparent and more cost-conscious management of the entire publishing process, including the decision as to whether internal or external printing facilities should be used.

(→ recommendation 11)

57. Pending the establishment of a cost-accounting system, the position of ACABQ as well as the General Assembly on the question of internal vs. external printing has been that maximum use should be made of internal printing capacities, and that use of external printing services should be controlled so as to ensure that such services are procured in the most economic and efficient manner. Based on this directive, the United Nations Secretariat has actually been making efforts to print internally as much as possible, which, coupled with the increasing use of desk-top publishing, has reduced the resources required for external printing.[40]

58. The Inspectors have found out, however, that the maximum use of internal printing capacities for publications purposes is not always possible for a number of reasons, including the: (i) uneven distribution of demand on the printing facilities throughout the year; (ii) priority assigned to parliamentary documents; (iii) lack of technology on complex work such as "colour separation" (e.g., some United Nations publications like *World Economic and Social Survey 1996* were obliged to be printed externally, because they required a highly sophisticated colour separation technology);[41] (iv) specific format used for some publications; and, (v) lack of specialized printing paper for certain kinds of publications not easily available in-house. Furthermore, it has also been pointed out that the shift towards the greater utilization of internal printing facilities places a heavy financial burden on the in-house processing services. For example, the rapidly escalating cost of paper is a major problem, as is the increasing reliance on the internal preparation of camera-ready copy which is costly not only in terms of staff time but also in terms of the materials and equipment required.[42] In this context, the Inspectors have detected that financial rules and regulations for internal and external printing appear somewhat rigid; redeployment of funds from the external printing ('340') to the supply ('500')account is not allowed.

59. External printing, on the other hand, may have advantages, including possible utilization of the latest technologies and expertise as previously mentioned. However it also appears to pose some problems for the United Nations Secretariat that need to be addressed. For instance, the Inspectors were told that the Commodity Procurement Section (OCSS), which is responsible for the outsourcing (external printing) arrangements, does not necessarily have sufficient expertise in printing and consequently, some vendors take advantage of this fact. In other words, external printing requires the maintenance of control and the administration of the entire process, which includes bidding, establishing liaison with printers, preparing invoices, among other things, in order to ensure the efficient and economical use of funds. This would require a considerable amount of extra time and possibly, additional staff.[43] The potentially negative impact on staff (in-house jobs) is another problem of outsourcing in general that would require attention.

60. Experiences with regard to the internal and external printing of publications of organizations outside the United Nations have been mixed (see Table 1 in annex). Comparative cost analyses on

internal vs. external printing have also been conducted by some organizations. FAO, for instance, decided to reduce its internal capacity in favour of external services, with an associated estimated savings on staff and equipment of $US 650,000 a year.[44] UNESCO, as well as ECLAC and ECE also consider that external printing is less expensive. On the other hand, some other organizations (IMO and OECD, for example) maintain the position that in-house printing is considered more economical.[45] Among these, the case of ILO Turin Centre is somewhat unique, in that only the labour required in the printing has been outsourced.[46] In any event, the comparative cost analysis on internal vs. external printing depends obviously on how to calculate costs, as well as on location and other related variables such as the volume to be processed.

(→ recommendations 12 and 13)

C.2.2 Electronic publishing

61. It goes without saying that electronic publishing (diskettes, CD-ROMs, on-line publications etc) has become popular as an alternative to print publications (books). In reality, however, the need for print publications will remain at least for some time, and at the same time, the United Nations Secretariat's capacity to produce electronic publications is somewhat limited at present. Accordingly, the issue of electronic publishing should be approached by bearing in mind its complementarity to print publications, as well as a need to enhance the Secretariat's capacity to meet an increasing demand in electronic publishing. It may be interesting to note that technically, both methods of publication (books and electronic publishing) could be processed in an integral manner. For example, OECD introduced an evolutionary method called "electronic processing" four years ago, in which manuscripts prepared by the author departments are processed in an integral and identical manner up to a certain stage when a print publication separates from an electronic publishing process. In other words, there is no difference between the conventional printing (books) and the electronic publishing processes up to a certain stage of production, which, the Inspectors were told, has been contributing greatly to an effective production of OECD publications.

62. The advantages of electronic publishing are manifold: publications in electronic form can be very effective and economical at the same time. This explains why many United Nations system organizations are placing their publications on the Internet, for example. Other electronic publication alternatives (such as CD-ROMs) are not only cheaper than print publications to manufacture, store and distribute in particular in the case of massive delivery of data/statistics, but are also capable of widening an Organization's outreach and in may cases, even bring financial returns to an Organization.[47]

63. It should be noted, however, that there are a number of legal matters (such as copyright protection, security of data for on-line publications, etc.), in addition to other issues (such as cost recovery and quality control) connected to electronic publishing. Because of the scope of this report, the Inspectors have chosen to refrain from going into detail where these matters are concerned, but do wish to note that the organizations in the United Nations system have already been addressing these issues individually as well as collectively through inter-agency mechanisms, such as IAMLADP. In the case of the United Nations, "Guidelines for publishing in an electronic format" has been issued as an administrative instruction,[48] and Member States may also wish to take up the guidelines in the context of the overall review of publications policy referred to in Section B.

(→ recommendation 14)

C.2.3 Cooperative arrangements

64. It has been reported to the Inspectors that in many instances, cooperative arrangements at the production stage have helped the organizations to decrease costs and to increase the impact of a publication.[49]

65. There are 2 main types of cooperative arrangements, commonly understood in the United Nations as "external publishing" and "joint publishing."

66. As a general rule, the United Nations publishes its well-established recurrent publications under its own imprint. However, external publishing arrangements in the form of co-publishing (defined as cooperation with an outside publisher - public or private - to produce on behalf

of the United Nations a publication; e.g., *The Yearbook of the United Nations*, published by Kluwer) are considered when it appears likely that such an arrangement will offer advantages to the Organization.[50] These advantages include: an increase in publicity and sales potentials through a wider channel and network and, a reduction in costs in development, production and distribution, as these costs are usually shared with, and sometimes even borne entirely by the co-publishers.[51] Because of these advantages, UNITAR, for instance, is using commercial companies for all publications (books) with many pages.[52]

67. On the other hand, a "joint publication", in UN terminology, is recognized as a publication that is made by 2 or more agencies. There are a variety of arrangements in this modality. Examples include the *System of National Accounts*, published in 1993 after more than 10 years of joint efforts by the United Nations Statistical Division, the World Bank, IMF, OECD and the Commission of European Community, and, the *World's Women: Trends and Statistics (1995)*, published by the United Nations, with the financial support of a number of agencies, including UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UNESCO and WHO. Both publications were produced in a joint manner on the basis of recommendations made by the Statistical Commission. The distinct nature of each organization, their different focus and the problems inherent in the coordination process are making joint publishing somewhat difficult occasionally. In general, however, this arrangement appears to have been successful and should be promoted, as appropriate. In addition to the examples above, successful examples of joint publications have been reported to the Inspectors in particular by WIPO, UNCTAD and UNEP.

(→ recommendation 15)

C.3 Sales and distribution stage

C.3.1 Sales versus free distribution

68. Sales versus the free distribution of publications has been a basic policy issue for some time, and although the Publications Board now has a policy on the matter, it has always been a challenge to the Board to find a balance between the two, in order to respond to a dual mandate for broadening dissemination while maximizing sales revenue to recover costs to the extent possible.[53] Newly developing electronic technologies are posing added challenges in this regard.

69. In the United Nations system, on average 80 percent of publications are distributed freely while 20 per cent are sold.[54] The situation varies widely from organization to organization; some organizations such as UNDP and UNFPA are distributing all publications for free[55], whereas there are some organizations which are trying to reduce free distribution if possible, because of the magnitude of mailing charges, etc. In any case, when publications are distributed freely, it is essential that these publications actually reach their intended target audiences with optimum penetration, which can be measured through poll checks and other means.[56]

C.3.2 Sales income and its treatment

Size of sales income

70. Revenue from the sale of United Nations publications has been rising in the recent years and the revenue for the 1996-1997 biennium is expected to be around US $ 16.2 million.[57] This sales income is larger than the sales income estimated to be accrued by any other organization in the United Nations system (see annex), but this figure constitutes roughly half of the sales income of, say, OECD for the same period. The Inspectors believe that there is a need to monitor sales income more closely.

(→ recommendation 16)

Treatment of sales income

71. According to the current practice, sales revenue is primarily used, in effect, to finance a number of the staff posts of the DPI Sales Section, and in the Sales Unit in Geneva, as well as other sales-related costs (other staff costs, general operating expenses, etc.), at both Headquarters and Geneva. During 1994-1995, for instance, the United Nations sales income was approximately US $ 15.2 million, but since the sales-related expenses which were financed by the sales income amounted to US $ 14.2 million, the "net income" was only US$ 1 million.[58]

72. Although the Inspectors are aware that the income derived from other revenue-producing activities (e.g., UN Postal Administration, gift centre, garage operations) are treated in basically

the same manner as the income resulting from the sales of publications, they nevertheless wish to question the rationale behind the above treatment of income from sales of publications. For, there seems to be no apparent reason why only the sales-related expenses (including staff costs) of Headquarters and Geneva should be covered by sales income. Sales income cannot be considered as the outcome of efforts of only those who are directly involved in the sales, but is rather the result of the collective efforts or performance of all those involved in the whole publishing process.

73. In this context, it is noted that within the United Nations system, there are a number of organizations (including UNESCO, ILO, WHO, FAO, IMO, ITU and the World Bank) which have a publications fund or account, financed primarily by the revenue generated by the sale of publications (in other words, sales income is not returned to a general account). Most of the funds/accounts are revolving in nature or self-sustaining in terms of cost recovery by sales income.[59] The major objective of maintaining a fund or account is to provide various departments (including the author departments) with incentives to make publishing activities more cost-effective with respect to the preparation, production and operating costs, etc. involved, in addition to the sales promotion, although the actual operational focus varies from organization to organization. At UNESCO, for example, the author departments receive 5 percent of sales income, whereas at FAO and WHO, for instance, sales income is intended to be used mainly for sales promotion. In the case of the World Bank, the current practice is that as much as 60 percent of sales income is distributed to the author departments, with the remainder earmarked for marketing and distribution activities.[60]

74. The Inspectors believe that the current United Nations practice of treating the sales income should be reviewed with the aim of using this income in a more rational and cost-effective way, by taking into account some of the practices already in place in other organizations, as appropriate.

(→ recommendation 17)

C.3.3 Pricing, marketing and distribution

Pricing

75. The pricing policy of the United Nations is basically guided by the principle of maximizing the revenue from the sale of publications to the extent consistent with ensuring their widest possible dissemination. Within this broad framework, the pricing policy of the United Nations is practically based not only on printing costs, but also takes into account other related costs (such as editing, design and marketing) as well as market and industry circumstances. This pricing policy should also reflect the quality and content of each publication from a marketing point of view, and special consideration should be made for readers in developing countries (through the use of, say, tier-pricing).[61] While the main consideration behind current pricing policy is to ensure that the costs associated with the production of the publications are to be reflected in the price, the fundamental problem is that costs for the majority of publications are not available for internally produced publications (see section C.2.1).[62]

76. In theory, the identification of direct production costs should be easier for publications which are produced externally, and organizations such as UNESCO, where publications are produced almost exclusively externally have a clearly-established formula[63] for determining the price of a publication. Another example is the United States Government Printing Office, which has also a very clear-cut pricing practice.[64]

Marketing and Sales Promotion

77. The marketing and promotion of sales of the United Nations publications include advertising, direct mail promotions, fairs/exhibits, sales visits, market research, a book review programme, an adoption programme (which promotes publications to university professors in an effort to get them to adopt a publication as a text for their courses) as well as Internet marketing.[65] Although it appears that marketing and other promotional efforts have intensified somewhat lately, there is still a need to strengthen such efforts, based on more systematic market analysis of sales potential and on readership surveys, as well as on any other innovative approaches.[66]

(→ recommendation 18)

Distribution

78. With a view to reaching target audiences in a timely and cost-effective manner, the United Nations has taken a number of measures. These include: a system of multiple mailing lists (both at Headquarters and at the United Nations information centres); the computerization of distribution lists; joint cooperation with commercial publishers; and, the distribution of free publications in particular through the Internet, which enables substantial savings in distribution costs.

79. The Secretary-General, as the Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), through its mechanism of IAMLADP, may wish to take the initiative of enhancing coordination with other United Nations system organizations on matters such as sharing mailing lists, reciprocal catalogue advertising, joint advertising in professional journals, exchange of information on the performance of sales agents, etc. as recommended by IAMLADP.[67]

NOTES

1. In particular, JIU/REP/71/8 and JIU/REP/84/5.

2. See IAMLADP/1996/R.11

3. For more details, see A/C.5/50/57 of 28 March 1996.

4. These findings are basically related to the mechanisms/processes in place for identifying the relevance, usefulness and potential for duplication of existing United Nations publications.

5. A/C.5/48/10, para.10.

6. Ibid., para. 11.

7. *Africa Recovery* readership survey report (DPI) dated 2 February 1995.

8. JIU/REP/95/12, paras. 134-145.

9. In the case of DPI, however, it has been communicated to the Inspectors that "given the specificity of its public information mandated functions and purposes, alternative means to the 'publications option' are not available."

10. A/C.5/50/57, page 12.

11. Another case where efforts to identify unnecessary duplication of publications are being made is DPI in which "most of DPI's publications are produced in consultation either with substantive departments and/or with other agencies and programmes of the UN system ...to avoid unnecessary duplication."

12. For example, "resolutions of the General Assembly are issued first in draft form in reports submitted by Main Committees and then as General Assembly documents; the resolutions are then issued by the Department of Public Information as an unofficial consolidated publication for the press; and finally they are issued in an official consolidated printed format. Many publications appear as parliamentary reports and are then reissued as sales publications." (A/50/7, para. 77)

13. ECLAC has informed the JIU that there is little (approximately 2% only) overlap between World Economic/Social Survey and their Economic Survey and that "the two are very complementary."

14. The consolidation of DPCSD, DESIPA and DDSMS as proposed recently by the Secretary-General can be seen along these lines (the Bulletin of United Nations reform, No.1, 17 March 1997).

15. JIU/REP/92/5.

16. A/51/406, para. 63.

17. A/C.5/48/10, para. 19.

18. Such is the case of UNCTAD which has reported that, after UNCTAD IX, the work programme was rewritten from scratch using a zero-based approach. UNCTAD reported that this has decreased parliamentary documentation and publications (for the first quarter of 1997 over the same period for 1995, translation was down by 58% and document reproduction by 35%).

19. For example, a publication which has a valid legislative mandate but has only marginal utility (on the basis of readership surveys) is considered a marginal publication, whereas a publication which is no more valid (on the basis of, say, a 'sun-set rule') is considered obsolete.

20. It is recalled that ACABQ has stressed the need to review "the date when each publication was first requested, who requested such publication, when it was last received and by whom", the objective of which should be to streamline "publications programme by elimination of duplicative publications, discontinuing publications which are considered no longer relevant to the implementation of the approved mandates, or merging publications, thus providing publications at less cost and releasing resources for other activities of the United Nations" (A/50/7, paras. 76-77).

21. The World Bank, for instance, has a Manual ("Publications policies and procedures") dated April 1994.

22. In 1993, the Publishing Division of OCSS was abolished and its functions were redistributed between OCSS and DPI.

23. The Inspectors have been informed that the two units for editorials in DPI and OCSS "process different materials and their separate existence does not entail double work."

24. A/C.5/48/10, para. 60.

25. The Inspectors were informed very recently that, as a result of efforts among DPI, OCSS and OLA to rationalize the production process for the *Treaty Series*, the steps set out in chart 2 have been significantly reduced and that the backlog is expected to be quickly run down.

26. Rule 110.38.

27. In 1993, for instance, the fully-constituted Publications Board did not meet at all (see "Update of A/C.5/48/10, para. 14).

28. The Inspectors have been informed that "the committee's regular meetings are supplemented by the activities of several working groups of the Board; e.g., a new publications promotions group has been established to strengthen coordination in the publications programme and enhance the quality and presentation of UN publications."

29. The term "centralized" refers here only to the Headquarters' structure.

30. Another related example is the Council of Europe, where a centralized Publishing and Documentation Service has been established as the result of a major restructuring measure in 1990, consolidating the Directorate of Administration, the Directorate of Information and the Linguistic Service for Translation and Conferences.

31. ILO, GB.265/3/3, March 1996, paras. 7-14.

32. The Bulletin of United Nations reform, No.1, 17 March 1997

33. It is recalled in this context that OIOS recommended to the Publications Board to "adopt a policy by the end of 1996 requiring departments to establish departmental reading committees, or a procedure for peer review of technical publications, which should follow standard external procedures" adapted for the United Nations requirements (E/AC.51/1996/2, para. 64).

34. A/50/6/Rev.1 (Proposed Programme Budget for 1996-1997), Vol. II, page 399.

35. The publications the Inspectors refer to here are those financed by the regular budget of the United Nations only.

36. The *Blue Books series* were originally intended to cover the peace-keeping activities only, but were expanded subsequently to encompass wide-ranging activities such as the advancement of women, human rights, population and social development, with a somewhat awkward financial arrangement utilizing projected savings in the external printing account to cover the costs of publications, except for those on peace-keeping, funding of which were made available by DPKO in an ad hoc manner.

37. Despite a 15% staff reduction, the Treaty Section could manage to produce "60 volumes in one year (1996), doubling the number produced and significantly cutting production time" (A/51/873, 21 April 1997, page 4).

38. The Inspectors have been informed that the computerized Documents Recording, Information and Tracking System (DRITS) which has been in operation since early 1990's serves for this purpose.

39. WHO, *Management Survey Report*, No. 190, August 1986.

40. "Proposed level of resources required for external printing for 1996-1997 amounts to $6,165,800, reflecting a reduction of 24.6% over the 1994-1995 appropriation" (A/50/7, para 79).

41. The Inspectors have been informed, however, that the UN Secretariat has recently improved its equipment and is now able to produce high quality, colour work with increased efficiency.

42. Update of A/C.5/48/10, para. 5.

43. IAMLADP/1994/R.6/Add.1, para. 10.

44. IAMLADP/1994/R.6, para. 10.

45. IAMLADP/1994/R.6/Add.2, para. 14.

46. The Turin Centre maintains a contract with a private company whereby the private company provides staff for operating printing machines in the Centre. Thus, labor costs are kept below the level of the international civil service, while the Centre can exercise complete control in the stages of the printing process.

47. DPI comments dated 4 September 1996 on the report by Mandl entitled "A review of UN publications policies, practices and operations."

48. ST/AI/189/Add. 28, 14 August 1996.

49. Apart from the cooperative arrangements covered here, there are some other arrangements such as "sponsorship" of publications that could be of benefit to the UN organizations. For instance, UNESCO has a policy on sponsorship of publications (Administrative Circular No. 1875), whereby the organization has issued publications that were developed externally, asking for royalties in the use of UNESCO's symbol.

50. A/C.5/48/10, para. 51.

51. For example, UNBIS Plus (CD-ROM) was developed by an external publisher without cost to the United Nations. The United Nations provided data and received free copies. The United Nations will also acquire royalties in the future after the publisher has recovered the development cost.

52. However, WHO indicated that they did not share the view of the relative advantages of external publishing set out in para. 66.

53. Update of A/C.5/48/10, para. 18.

54. Report by Mandl entitled "A review of UN publications policies, practices and operations" of 30 April 1993, page 40.

55. Except for the Human Development Report (UNDP).

56. WHO, *Management Survey Report* No. 190.

57. A/50/6/Rev.1, Vol. II, page 589.

58. Ibid., page 589.

59. For instance, the US Government Printing Office has a revolving account, with a straightforward objective of recovering direct cost only by sales income.

60. At ILO, most of the sales income is used currently for marketing, reprint and translation purposes.

61. ST/AI/189/Add.15/Rev.1.

62. Report on the sale of publications, 1994 and 1995 (96/DPI/2).

63. In the case of UNESCO, in principle a multiplier co-efficient (5~5.5) is applied to direct costs (external pre-production, printing and binding costs). UNESCO has explained that, for example, if 3000 copies of a publication cost US$ 4000, the unit price would be US$ 1.33. Then a multiplier (say 5) is used to get the catalogue price (US$ 6.65), 50% (55% in the case of developing countries) of which would go to distributors. To get net profit, freight and promotion costs would further have to be deducted.

64. Sales prices are fixed according to (I) costs as determined by the Public Printer; and (ii) 50 percent mark-up. Costs include printing and binding, handling and postage. The 50 percent mark-up covers the costs of reprints, statutorily authorized 25 percent discounts to book dealers and quantity purchasers, unsaleable publications and related expenses. For overseas shipping, there is further 25 percent mark-up.

65. Report on the sale of publications, 1994 and 1995 (96/DPI/2). For instance, United Nations publications catalogue was placed on the Internet in August 1995.

66. For instance, the use of credit cards for purchasing publications has been introduced in some organizations (for instance, UNESCO), which has had a positive impact on sales of publications. In the case of the UN, it has been pointed out that an 800 number is being used very efficiently in addition to credit cards.

67. IAMLADP/1996/R.11, para. 15.

Table 1. Selected Indicators on Publishing Activities*

Organization	FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES (1996-1997)			SALES INCOME FROM PUBLICATIONS			INFORMATION SYSTEM ON:	
	Regular Budget		Extrabudgetary[1]	Amount[1] (1996-1997)	Treatment Deposit to: %[2]			
	$ million	%[3]	$ million	$ million	Regular Budget	Publications Fund/Account	Direct Cost	Indirect Cost
UN	[4]			16.2	100		yes[5]	no
ECA	0.3	0.3			100		no	no
ECE	0.2[6]	0.5		0.3[7]	100		no	no
ECLAC	6.7[8,9]	8.2	0.05	0.05[7]	100		yes	no
ESCAP				[7]	100		no	no
ESCWA	0.05		0.08	0.01	100		no	no
FAO	23.5[9]	3.6	2.4	2		100	yes	no
IAEA	43.9[9]	10.0	3.0[9]	1.9	100[10]		no	yes
ICAO							no	no
IMO	6.8	11.2	0	9.2		100	yes	yes
ILO	7.3	1.3		4.3		100	yes	no
ITU						100	yes	yes
UNCHS	0.07		0.2					no
UNCTAD								
UNDP							yes	yes
UNEP	0		2.4[11]	0.2		100	no	no
UNESCO	1.8[12]	0.4	6.6	6.5		100	yes	no
UNFPA								
UNHCR	2.5[13]			[14]	100[14]		no	no
UNICEF					100[15]			
UNIDO	1.5	0.9	0.5	0.2	100[16]		no	no
UNU				0.5	100		yes	no
UPU	2.0	4.2		0.9	100		yes	yes
WFP							yes	no
WHO[17]	12.7	4.2	7.7	6.8		100[18]	yes	no[19]
WIPO	[20]		0.1	5.6	100		yes	
WMO						100	yes	yes
(Reference)								
IMF				4.5[21]				
World Bank				2.8[21]				
Council of Europe								
OECD					100			
GPO				81-82[21]		100		

* as reported by the organizations concerned

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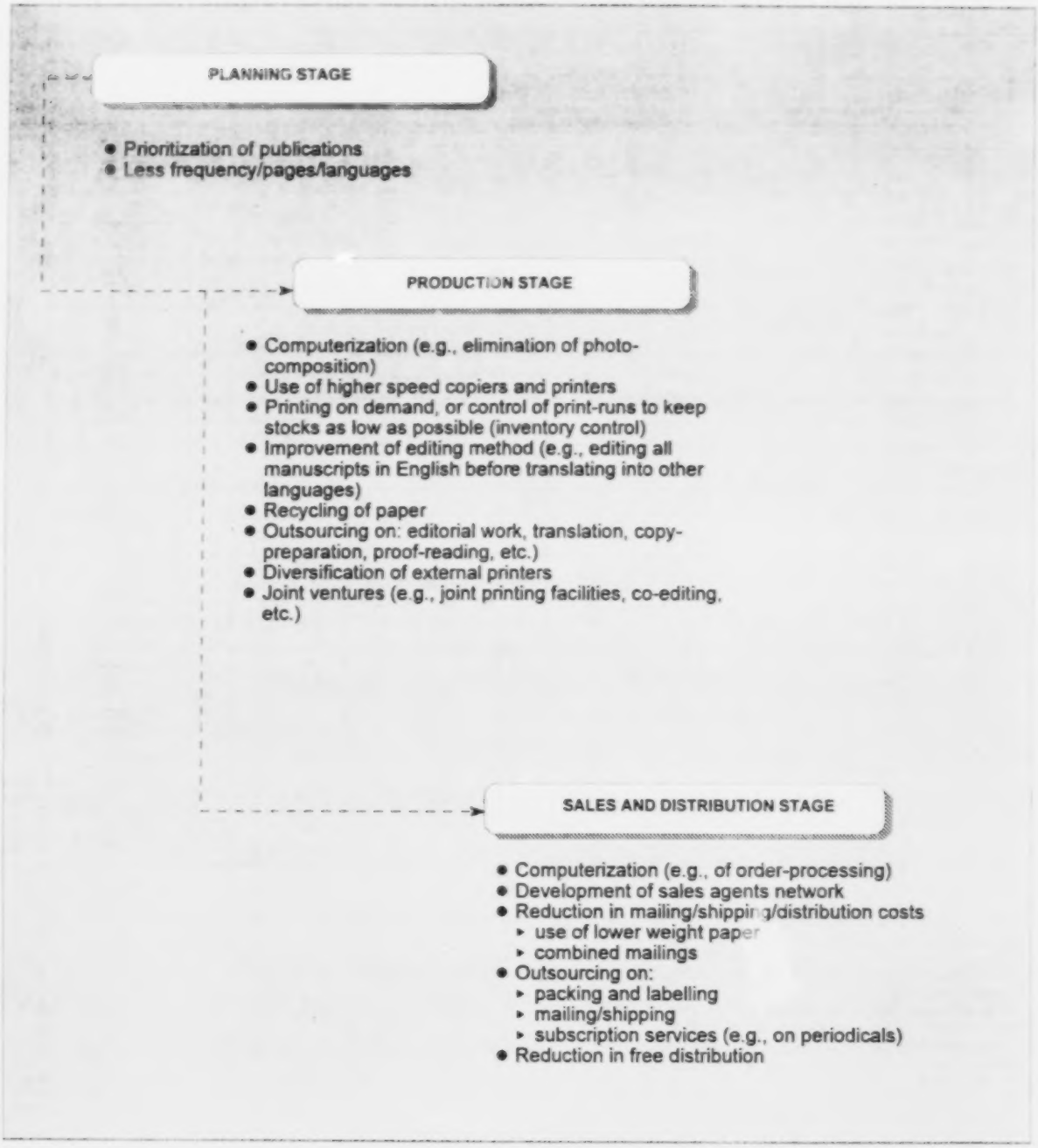
[1] estimates
[2] % of sales income total
[3] % of regular budget total
[4] no appropriate figure can be provided except 76.3 million, which are the provisions for "publishing services" under Section 26E (A/50/6/Rev. 1). Publications are assumed to account for about 10% of the amount, but it represents only a part of resources devoted to publications.
[5] certain publications only
[6] amount allocated by New York for external printing
[7] part of sales income at Headquarters
[8] includes budget for documents
[9] includes staff costs, publishing and printing costs, etc.
[10] except for the case of one journal
[11] includes budget for documents
[12] printing costs excluding UNESCO courier
[13] consolidated figure managed by UNHCR's Public Information Section
[14] income from the sales of publications is minimal (e.g., the expected income for 1997 is US$ 19,500) since most of UNHCR publications are provided free of charge. Sales income is credited to miscellaneous income (general account).
[15] whole of sales income is transferred to general resources
[16] of which 59.3% is used to reduce the contribution of the Member States, 40.7% to reimburse cost of printing, promotion, etc.
[17] Headquarters only
[18] sales income is to be used in support sales, marketing and promotion efforts, staff responsible for those efforts, reprints for sales purposes (res. WHA 22.8) and, in cases of a surplus, it will be credited to a general account.
[19] but WHO did make a cost analysis on (13) selected publications in 1986
[20] does not have an explicit expenditure budget for publications
[21] annual figure

PRINTING METHOD			NUMBER OF TITLES PUBLISHED (1995)		NUMBER OF ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS (1991-1997)			Organization
Internally	Externally	Mix	Titles	of which are electronic (no.)	Diskettes	CD-ROMs	On-line	
		✔				3		UN
		✔	223	2	5	1	60	ECA
		✔	71	4				ECE
		✔	358	1	2	5	5	ECLAC
		✔	124	0				ESCAP
		✔	76	0	7	0	0	ESCWA
		✔	924	25	35	4	10	FAO
		✔[22]	191	1				IAEA
✔[23]			169	26				ICAO
✔[24]			32	6	1	5		IMO
	✔[25]		32	1		3		ILO
		✔[26]	290	20	100	30	2 400	ITU
✔								UNCHS
		✔	261	3				UNCTAD
	✔[27]		50[28]	0			200[29]	UNDP
		✔	80	0	0	0		UNEP
	✔		91[30]	12		17	1	UNESCO
								UNFPA
		✔[31]	37	2		1	1	UNHCR
							[32]	UNICEF
		✔[22]	19	4	8			UNIDO
	✔		26	0	1			UNU
		✔	28	0		1	5-10	UPU
	✔		2	0	0	0	0	WFP
	✔		46[33]	1	1		2	WHO
		✔	36 004[34]	237	2	1 040	40[35]	WIPO
		✔[36]	45	0	3		10	WMO
								(Reference)
								IMF
			560					World Bank
		✔						Council of Europe
✔[37]								OECD
		✔[36]						GPO

[22] printing is done externally when internal capacity is insufficient and/or external production is expected to be cost-effective
[23] except for the ICAO Journal
[24] in principle, only colour separations are done externally
[25] most sales publications in general are printed externally
[26] 80% externally
[27] most printing is done externally
[28] at Headquarters
[29] per year (includes press releases and news bulletins)
[30] excluding one monthly and 6 quarterly periodicals
[31] publications requiring full-colour and quality printing are printed externally
[32] all advocacy publications (Progress of Nations, The State of the World's Children, Annual Report, etc.) are put on the Internet, increasingly in French and Spanish as well as in English
[33] excluding 7 journals (one weekly, 2 bi-monthly, and 4 quarterly) and one journal supplement
[34] publications constitute a central element of WIPO's output, particularly for the registration activities under a number of Treaty/Agreement/Protocol(s)
[35] 800 publications on magnetic tapes are also produced
[36] in principle, internally
[37] mostly internally

TABLE 2. SOME ADDITIONAL COST-EFFECTIVE MEASURES*


PLANNING STAGE
Prioritization of publications
Less frequency/pages/languages
PRODUCTION STAGE
Computerization (e.g., elimination of photo-composition)
Use of higher speed copiers and printers
Printing on demand, or control of print-runs to keep stocks as low as possible (inventory control)
Improvement of editing method (e.g., editing all manuscripts in English before translating into other languages)
Recycling of paper
Outsourcing on: editorial work, translation, copy-preparation, proof-reading, etc.)
Diversification of external printers
Joint ventures (e.g., joint printing facilities, co-editing, etc.)
SALES AND DISTRIBUTION STAGE
Computerization (e.g., of order-processing)
Development of sales agents network
Reduction in mailing/shipping/distribution costs
use of lower weight paper
combined mailings
Outsourcing on:
packing and labelling
mailing/shipping
subscription services (e.g., on periodicals)
Reduction in free distribution

* Measures suggested by organizations within the United Nations system, but not covered in the main part of this report.